

working on the vote, “ or, “Thanks for helping on tax relief.” That may be—if you consider that a meeting, the answer is, yes, I’m sure I have, in a roomful of people, as we either thank people for success in policy or thank people for going out of their way to get a piece of legislation passed on the Hill.

Listen, thank you all very much. Looking forward to Tuesday evening. I hope you are as well. Thank you.

NOTE: The President’s news conference began at 10:15 a.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; James D. Wolfensohn, Quartet Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Deputy Assistant to the President for Homeland Security Kenneth Rapuano. Reporters referred to Donald E. Powell, Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, who is coordinating Federal gulf coast relief efforts; and Mike Brown, former Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Remarks Following Discussions With Parliament Member Saad Hariri of Lebanon

January 27, 2006

It’s my honor to welcome a Member of the Lebanese Parliament, Saad Hariri, here to the Oval Office. We’ve just had a very interesting and important discussion about our mutual desire for Lebanon to be free—free of foreign influence, free of Syrian intimidation, free to chart its own course.

The American people mourn the loss of life. I know it’s been hard on you and your mom, who we had the honor of meeting in Paris, and your family to think about your dad, a man who cared about Lebanon a lot. It’s very important for the investigation into your dad’s death to go forward. We expect there to be a full and firm investigation, and the people who are responsible for your dad’s death need to be held to account.

I want to thank you for your passion for the people of Lebanon. I was telling him I was raised in west Texas, and I can remember Lebanese-American Texans being such

great citizens of our State and our country. Many people of Lebanese extraction want Lebanon to flourish and thrive, and so do I. It will be very important for the region for Lebanon’s democracy to be able to reach its full potential. And there’s no doubt in my mind, with the focused effort of the free world reminding Syria to uphold to U.N. resolution 1559, we will be able to achieve the objective.

So I talked about a donors conference—he’s going to work the world community to try to help organize a conference to help the Lebanese people get going. And we appreciate very much your suggestions and your advice. In the meantime, welcome to the Oval Office. Thank you for your courage. I appreciate it very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at noon in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nazek Hariri, widow of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon, who was assassinated on February 14, 2005, in Beirut. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Proclamation 7976—National African American History Month, 2006

January 27, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As we celebrate National African American History Month, we recognize the many contributions of African Americans to our country and reinforce our commitment to be a Nation of opportunity and hope for every citizen.

Throughout our history, African Americans have courageously worn our Nation’s uniform while defending peace and liberty around the globe. Patriots like Thurgood Marshall and Rosa Parks broke down racial barriers and inspired our Nation to make good on the promise of equal justice under law. Educators like Mary McLeod Bethune and Dr. Frederick Patterson transformed the academic world, with the goal of ensuring